



# PRIVATE SCREENINGS

## THE GAMES GUIDE TO HOME VIDEO GAMES

**O**n any given night, it is conceivable that more TV sets are tuned to Pac-Man than to Dan Rather. Despite the fuss from some fronts, video games are here to stay. After all, how can a game of gin rummy compete with saving the earth from an alien attack?

Though equally turned on to arcade and home video games, we find some distinct advantages to the latter. You can play them in a comfortable chair within raiding distance of the fridge; you needn't lose gracefully; and you don't need quarters. And this year the claim that home video games bring the arcade into your living room, without the jostling crowds, finally carries the ring-blip-zap-blam of truth.

No wonder choosing from among the seven major video systems and the proliferating number of cartridges (a year ago the Atari VCS had 50 games; now it has 100) is as difficult as fending off a flock of electronic space demons. Fortunately, there are those hard-working, self-sacrificing few who spend nearly every waking moment playing . . . *oops, evaluating* . . . any video game they can get their hands on. It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it.

BY PHIL WISWELL



# THE GAME SYSTEMS

A video game system, like a stereo, is essentially a means of "translating" encoded information into usable form. But although virtually any phonograph record can be played on any phonograph, game cartridges and cassettes are designed for use with a specific game system and cannot be used with any other (except where an adaptor is available). So before choosing a system, give careful consideration to the number and quality of the games available for it. Once you choose the hardware, you've committed yourself to the software.

The seven game systems described here come in several price ranges and offer a variety of designs, capabilities, controllers, and peripherals, including expansion modules that turn some systems into home computers. Prices in parentheses range from the best discount we've seen to the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

## ASTROCADE

(\$300, by Astrocade)

This is a reintroduction of the Bally Professional Arcade (1977), also known for a time as Astrovision. The console has a cassette (not cartridge) slot, reset and eject buttons, a 24-character keypad, and room to store controllers or cassettes. The machine's three sound synthesizers can generate three-part harmony in a three-octave range, and its three microprocessors produce impressive displays in 256 colors and animation that rivals that of the new ColecoVision and Atari 5200. You can create sound and visual effects with the Music Maker and Creative Crayon cassettes (the latter has a light-pen for drawing directly on the screen), and record them on tape for later replay.

The hand controllers have a trigger that needs a lighter touch and can fire faster than many competitors' action buttons, a smooth, accurate speed knob, and joysticks that function usefully as remote switches to reset or select games. On many cassettes, you can preselect the number of "lives," points, or rounds.

Although Bally produced many Astrocade games before the recent advances in game technology, graphically most of them are as good as VCS or Odyssey<sup>2</sup> cartridges. And Astrocade's new games, like *The Incredible Wizard* (see review), are often better in graphics and speed of animation than Intellivision cartridges.

The machine has two built-in games—a two-player gunfight and a boxing game for up to four—plus a unique program that allows you to draw on the screen and a simple calculator program.

Astrocade can be expanded to a home computer in two ways. The Bally Basic cartridge (\$50) gives you 4,000 (4K) bytes of memory storage, enough for you to experiment with programming. The Z-GRASS keyboard attachment (\$600) adds 32K of RAM, expandable to 64K.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STAN FELLERMAN

## ATARI VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM

(\$130-\$200, by Atari)



As one of the first game machines designed to accept interchangeable cartridges, the VCS is limited in its graphic capability and game complexity compared to what today's state-of-the-art systems can produce. (This drawback is offset somewhat by the new Supercharger, described below.) On the positive side, the VCS accepts the most extensive and varied library of game cartridges, with more than 20 companies creating games for it. And Atari's own cartridges have the added appeal of including many variations (usually different skill or speed levels). The biggest competition to the VCS is likely to be ColecoVision and Atari's own 5200, with add-on modules that accept VCS cartridges.

The console has six switches and a cartridge slot on top, with ports for two single or two paired hand controllers in the rear (where they can be difficult to insert). Two pairs of controllers make four-player action games possible. The difficulty switch for each controller (or pair of controllers) effectively doubles the skill or speed levels programmed into the cartridges, a feature unique to the VCS. Setting the switches at different skill levels often allows an adult and a child to compete on equal terms.

Unfortunately, many VCS games require controllers other than the joysticks that come with the system. Paddle controllers, driving controllers, and keyboard controllers cost \$22 a pair.

The entire VCS system, game cartridges, and controllers are available from Sears as the Tele-Game System, usually at lower prices than most VCS retailers offer. The VCS and Tele-Game systems are identical in construction and operation, and all equipment and game cartridges are interchangeable.

## SUPERCHARGER

(\$70, by Arcadia\*)

This new VCS accessory increases the system's capacity for graphics resolution and playfield complexity, and adds more games to its library. The unit, with the game *Phaser Patrol*, sells for \$70. In the long run it should pay for itself. Arcadia's game cassettes (four are currently available, and two more will be out by the end of the year) sell for \$15, Atari cartridges for much more, so you can get five Arcadia games plus the Supercharger for less than five Atari cartridges alone.

VCS games have previously been limited by the machine's relatively few 128 bytes of screen RAM (Random Access Memory). Games loaded through the Supercharger can contain 6,272 bytes. The Supercharger plugs into the VCS cartridge slot; a wire connects the unit to the earphone jack of any cassette tape recorder and the game cassette (not cartridge) is loaded into the VCS computer's memory by being "played" in the tape machine. And we mean *any* cassette recorder—among the ones we tested was a 20-year-old machine with the "fidelity" of a toy record-player. Some cassettes include an action preview of other Arcadia games.

\* Name changing to Starpath.





## ATARI 5200

(\$250, by Atari)



Because the 5200 did not arrive in time for extensive play-testing, this review is based in part on prototypes tested at trade shows.

The unit has a sleek, futuristic design, with "universal" hand controllers (as Atari calls them) that are works of art, combining joystick, paddle, pause button, and keypad. The joystick moves through 360 degrees, which allows very smooth and fancy maneuvering. A new switch box automatically switches to the TV when the game is turned off—so once the unit is connected, you never have to fool with it again. Wonderfully, it causes neither visual nor aural static when a game cartridge is removed. Instead, the screen goes black.

Three additions are planned for 1983: a Trak-Ball controller (ideal for games like Centipede), a Voice Synthesizer module with games, and a VCS adaptor to allow VCS-compatible cartridges to be played on this system.

The game cartridges for this system represent a great advance over those for the VCS. Super Breakout, which comes with the system, is a colorful, fast-moving game with five variations. The graphics and animation of the other games we've seen for the 5200 are at least equal to the best available for any system.

## COLECOVISION

(\$200, by Coleco)

This is the most powerful system in its price range. It has, along with the Atari 5200, the best graphics display we've seen on a home system, rivaling that of many low-priced home computers. If we could combine ColecoVision's microprocessor, the Atari 5200's joystick, and Intellivision's controllers, we'd have a dream of a game system.

The hand controllers, which have retractable coil-cords and can be stored in the top of the machine, each consist of a 12-button keypad, fire buttons on both sides, and a joystick. The joystick knob seems awkward and less comfortable than those of the other systems, a preliminary reservation based on limited play-testing.

A built-in expansion port allows modules to be added. Module #1 (\$60) makes the unit compatible with VCS game cartridges. This does not upgrade the games, of course, but if you trade in a VCS for this newer system (plus module), you won't have to throw out your VCS cartridges. Module #2 (available soon) is a driving controller that comes with the Turbo game cartridge for \$60 (see review). Module #3, expected in 1983, will convert the system into a home computer.

ColecoVision comes with a Donkey Kong cartridge, one of the hottest arcade games of the year (see review).



	Astrocade	Atari VCS	Atari 5200	ColecoVision	Mattel Intellivision	Odyssey 2	Vectrex
<b>Year Introduced</b>	1977	1977	1982	1982	1979	1978	1982
<b>Price</b>	\$300 w/3 games	\$130-\$200 w/Combat	\$250 w/Super Breakout	\$200 w/Donkey Kong	\$200-\$300 w/Poker & Blackjack	\$130-\$200 w/Speedway	\$200 w/Mine Storm
<b>No. of Game Cartridges</b>	30	100	10*	10**	50	45	13
<b>Cartridge Price Range</b>	\$25-\$35	\$20-\$40	\$32-\$40	\$30	\$30-\$60	\$15-\$50	\$30
<b>Max. No. of Players</b>	4	4	4	2	2	2	2
<b>Cost Per Pair of Controllers</b>	\$55	\$22	----	----	----	----	\$35 singly
<b>Joystick Directions</b>	8	8	360	8	16	8	360
<b>Pause Button</b>	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no
<b>Existing Peripherals (E) and Forthcoming Peripherals (F)</b>	(E) Light Pen for computer graphics (\$60)	(E) Supercharger (\$70)	(F) Trak-Ball, Voice Synthesizer, VCS Adaptor	(E) VCS Adaptor (\$60) (F) Driving Controllers	(E) Intellivoice Speech Module (\$70)	(E) The Voice Speech Module (\$100)	----
<b>Converts to Computer?</b>	yes; \$50 for 2K, \$600 for 100K	no	no	scheduled for 1983	being developed	no	no
<b>Strong Points</b>	doodling, 2 games, and calculator built-in; console storage for games	largest game library; built-in difficulty switches	very good controllers; very good graphics; unique TV switch box	excellent graphics; built-in expansion port	good keypad design; very good graphics	built-in keyboard; good hand controllers	built-in screen; excellent joysticks and graphics
<b>Weak Points</b>	price	limited memory	too new to determine	too new to determine	many two-player only sports games	limited memory	small screen

\*With an adaptor promised for 1983, this system will also play all VCS-compatible cartridges.

\*\*With its VCS adaptor, this system will also play all VCS-compatible cartridges.

(Game Systems continued on page 41)



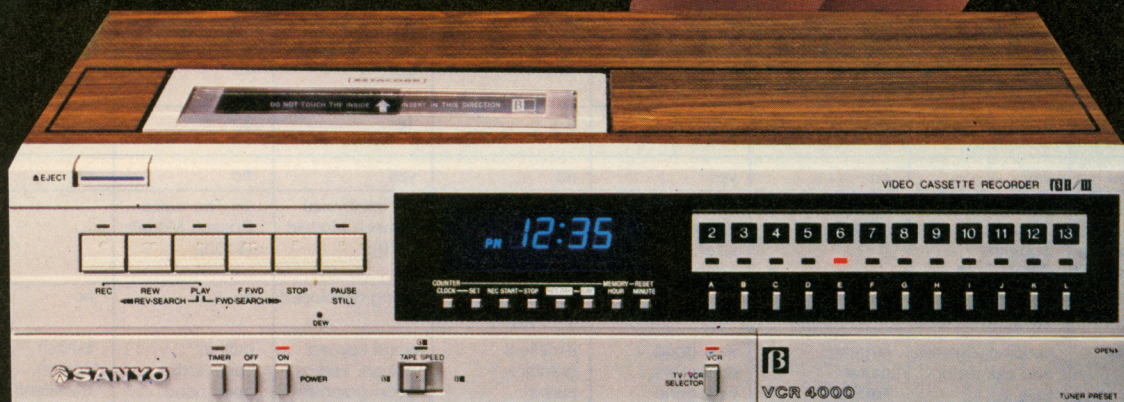


The movement seems effortless, yet underneath the lean body is the harmony of a great machine. And the heart of a great Olympic athlete. The Sanyo VCR 4000 Video Recorder. Precise. Enduring. And the first Sanyo VCR to offer Beta-scan visual picture search and freeze-frame for under \$500\*. Which equals not only world class performance, but world class value.

Sanyo.  
Official video products of the  
1984 Los Angeles Olympics.



# WORLD CLASS PERFORMERS



The Sanyo VCR 4000 features 3-day programmable recording, remote pause control, freeze-frame, Beta-scan visual picture search and 12-channel preset touch tuning.

\*Manufacturer's suggested retail price, \$499.95. Actual price may vary.

© 1982 Sanyo Electric, Inc.



## INTELLIVISION MASTER COMPONENT

(\$200-\$300, by Mattel Electronics)

This system delivers much better graphics than the VCS and Odyssey<sup>2</sup>, but its speed of animation is not great, and some games feel sluggish. Intellivision games are generally high in quality, and tend to be more complex and involving than those for older systems (except Astrocade), but they often require players to digest lengthy rules before playing. Unfortunately, the games that come with the system—Poker and Blackjack—are slow, nonaction games.

The Master Component is a sleek console into which the hand controllers fit on retractable coil-cords. Each controller has an excellent 12-button keypad (a plastic overlay comes with each game to show what the keys represent), two action buttons in each side, and a 16-direction disc control instead of a joystick. Regrettably, the 16 directions are not indicated.

The unit's sound generator produces nice three-part harmonies, but the Astrocade synthesizers are better. The Intellivoice Speech Synthesis Module (\$70) and four games to go with it were recently introduced. The module, which has a volume control, fits into the cartridge slot and games programmed with voice are played through it. Male and female voices introduce the games, cheer on winners, razz losers, and warn of danger when appropriate.

A long-promised Keyboard Component to convert the unit into a home computer with 16K of RAM was briefly available in some markets for \$600, but Mattel has now gone back to the drawing board in hopes of developing a more competitively priced add-on.

In some cable TV markets, Intellivision owners can, for \$10-\$12 a month, subscribe to Play Cable and order about a dozen Mattel games by phone 24 hours a day, with a new selection every month.

The system is sold by Sears as the Sears Super Video Arcade.



## ODYSSEY<sup>2</sup>

(\$130-\$200, by North American Philips Consumer Electronic Corporation)



Since its introduction in 1978, the only change in this system is that the hand controllers of current models can't be removed. This has eliminated the most common consumer problem: bent pins that make the controllers difficult or impossible to plug in.

The console consists of a 49-character keyboard and an On/Off switch. The keyboard is flat and completely sealed, protecting the microprocessor and permitting plastic overlays to be used with the new Master Strategy Series. In games like Quest for the Rings and Conquest of the World (not reviewed), you enter data by touching the appropriate symbols on a map overlay. In The Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt (see review), the keyboard is used to enter stock and bond transactions.

There are no extra costs for hand controllers with Odyssey<sup>2</sup> because all games use only the two that come attached to the console. So three- or four-player games are out of the question. The joysticks are easier to use and more comfortable than those that come with other systems; they can move objects on the screen in eight directions, and their "click stops," like those on a camera lens, make it easy to tell where they're pointing without taking your eyes off the screen. The joystick boxes, unfortunately, are too big for a child's hand, and the fire button requires a heavy touch.

Odyssey<sup>2</sup> comes with a three-game cartridge that will help you get used to the hand controllers and the keyboard. Speedway and Spin Out are simple racecar games for one or two players; Crypto Logic is a two-player scrambled-word game.

An accessory Voice Module (\$100) that reproduces human speech fits over the cartridge slot. Regular software plays normally when plugged into it, but only games programmed with speech capability will "speak." The unit has 200 words stored in memory, plus phonemes (phonetic sounds of human speech) that can be strung together to form more words. Neither the module nor the cartridges to be used with it were available for play-testing.

## VECTREX ARCADE SYSTEM

(\$200, by GCE Corporation)

This lightweight, attractive unit closely replicates the three-dimensional vector graphics of games like Asteroids, Battlezone, and Tempest, and the built-in sound synthesizer accurately reproduces arcade sounds (but not to worry—there's a volume control). And with a nine-inch (diagonal) monitor as part of the system, it doesn't usurp the family TV set.

The single control console (another can be added when two-player games become available) is extremely well designed, with a 360° self-centering joystick (that slightly favors left-handed players) and four action buttons. Each cartridge comes with an overlay that goes over the screen to provide color and information about how to use the controller. The overlays work astonishingly well; it's almost impossible to tell they're being used.

The real beauty of Vectrex is its visual effects, which cannot be obtained with any other system. Although vector graphics can't portray the "cute" characters found in games like Donkey Kong, that's a small price to pay for such exciting game play.







## ASTROSMASH

Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$30, 2 levels, 1 player, ★)

As Chicken Little warned, "The sky is falling!" Here the sky is raining meteors, spinning bombs, guided missiles, and (after 20,000 points) an occasional UFO that shoots back at your ground cannon. Watch out for shrapnel from a hit meteor, which can blow up your cannon. The tension is maintained by a novel scoring mechanism in which you earn points for every piece of junk you blow up, but *lose* points for every piece that makes it to the ground. As the speed and number of objects increase, you really have your hands full trying to down more objects than you miss. It takes at least an hour to reach excellent scores of 100,000 or more (Mattel reports a high of 32 million!), but a pause button allows you to take a coffee break.



## ATLANTIS

Imagic for VCS (\$30, 4 levels, 1-2 players, ★, shown) and for Intellivision (\$35)

In defense of Atlantis's six installations, your job is to shoot at and destroy planes as they fly across the screen. Survivors return at a lower altitude. At the lowest altitude, their laser weapons knock out the first installation they come in contact with unless you blow them up. Your three guns can neither be moved nor protected. Variation #3 is an enjoyable cooperative game in which two players each man a side gun (the center gun is inoperative). At the end of all variations, a saucer leaves Atlantis with its sole survivor—you—and reappears in another Imagic cartridge, Cosmic Ark, in which your task is to repopulate Atlantis.



# THE GAMES

From the more than 250 games available for the seven major home systems, we've chosen our favorites on the basis of sustained interest, challenge, graphics quality, and that elusive virtue—enjoyability. The number reviewed for each system is roughly proportional to the total number available for each.

Games are arranged alphabetically, color-coded by systems on which they can be played.

Astrocade

Mattel  
Intellivision

Atari VCS

Odyssey 2

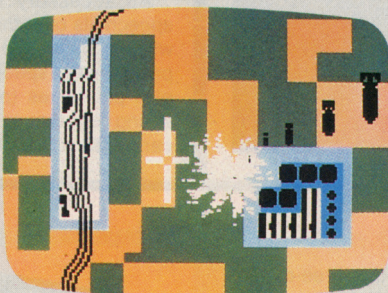
Atari 5200

ColecoVision

Vectrex

For each cartridge, we note approximate price; number of players ("sim." means they play simultaneously; otherwise players take turns); and number of levels (distinct levels of difficulty rather than the variations listed by the manufacturer, which are often minor). Significant game variations are noted in the review. Stars indicate the difficulty of learning (not playing) a game: easy (★), medium (★★), or hard (★★★).

## B-17 BOMBER



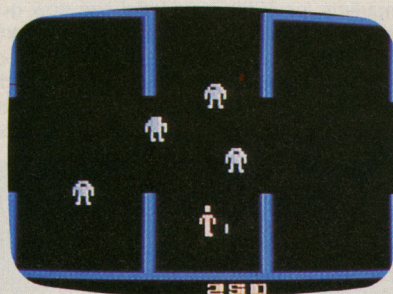
Mattel for Intellivision with Intellivoice  
(\$40, 6 levels, 1 player, ★★★)

The scene is Europe, the year 1943, and you're on a bombing mission in a B-17, the Flying Fortress. Although there are nine different screens to monitor, you have the help of four gunners, a co-pilot, and a bombardier, whose voices keep you informed of approaching danger. Not only must you complete the mission and make it back to England, you also have to avoid anti-aircraft flak and outshoot enemy fighter planes. You can keep the game going for more than an hour if you make it back safely after each run to have your plane automatically refueled and repaired.

## BERZERK

Atari for VCS (\$30, 4 levels, 1 player, ★)

This is by far the most faithful translation of a popular arcade game for the VCS. One player at a time must escape from a series of increasingly difficult mazes while battling robot meanies and outrunning Evil Otto. You can travel and shoot in eight directions—which is a big help, because the robots can move and shoot in only four. Beware of the 12th maze (orange robots), when you can't outrun enemy fire anymore. The trickiest part of Berzerk is to avoid the lethal touch of the robots while shooting at them and simultaneously trying not to get shot or to touch the walls of the maze, which would spell instant zap. And the sound effects of a hero being zapped really let you know he's had it.

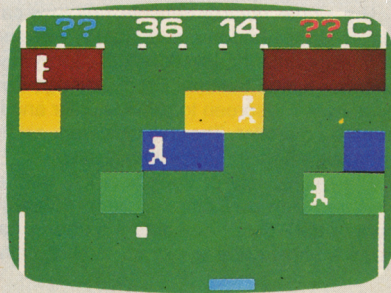


## BLOCKOUT/BREAKDOWN

N.A.P.C.E.C. for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
(\$23, 1 level, 1-2 players sim., ★★)

These games are versions of the "knock-out-the-blocks" genre taken a step further. In two-player Blockout, the offensive player must cut a path through four rows of blocks across the top of the screen before the defensive player, who controls four little men, can replace the blocks. To get new blocks, the little men must touch a side wall, so the offense should try to isolate them in the middle. The defense, after replacing a single missing block, should run immediately to the other side of the screen to avoid getting stranded.

Breakdown is a similar one- or two-player game in which a single shot goes all the way through four rows, then cuts its way back toward the paddle, knocking out more blocks. It's a tougher repair job for the defense, since each ball can knock out up to eight blocks.





## CENTIPEDE

Atari for the 5200  
(\$40, 1-2 players, ★, not shown)

OK, bug blasters, put away your quarters—this Centipede is just as challenging as the arcade version. Although there are fewer mushroom targets, you hardly notice. You're too busy battling feisty fleas and wretched spiders. Players tend to use two basic strategies, and we find combining them works best: clearing a vertical space center screen in an attempt to stop the Centipede from descending, and clearing mushrooms from the bottom of the screen. The only thing in the arcade version missing from this one is the Trak-Ball controller, which allows you to move in 360 degrees by merely passing your hand over the knob. Atari promises a Trak-Ball for home use sometime next year.

## A CONVERSATION WITH MR. AND MS. PAC-MAN

**W**hen Mr. and Ms. Pac-Man decided to grant GAMES an interview, we drove to their house in Beverly Hills. Pac-Man, a glowing yellow tan behind his sunglasses, greeted us at the front chute. He led us through a labyrinth of corridors decorated in Danish modern, quickly passing the center pen with an apprehensive glance. Seated in the kitchen was Ms. Pac-Man, her unknotted hair cascading down her shoulders. Throughout the interview she offered us fresh fruit.

**GAMES:** You eat amazing quantities of food without gaining weight. What's your secret?

**Ms. Pac-Man:** I don't have a special diet. I just burn off calories by jogging constantly.

**GAMES:** I notice you don't have a swimming pool or own sumptuous furniture. Is it fair to say you haven't "gone Hollywood"?

**Pac-Man:** Success hasn't spoiled us. We don't hang out with the high-livers like Donkey Kong or Crazy Climber. We're stay-at-home types. Who knows, maybe our lives have fallen into a pattern.

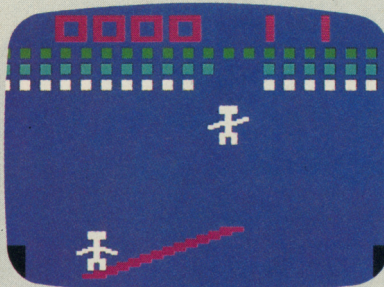
**GAMES:** Certainly Clyde and company provide excitement.

**Pac-Man:** I'm not paranoid, but those guys haunt us day and night. It's like living in a John Carpenter movie.

## CIRCUS ATARI

Atari for VCS  
(\$25, 8 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

This game, based on and named after the Atari coin-op hit, is both cute and difficult to master. You control two little clowns bouncing on a seesaw and attempt to pop rows of moving balloons with their pointed heads. Each time you fail to catch a clown on the seesaw, you lose a life; after five losses, the game ends. Score 10,000, and you can probably "max out." A clown is harder to catch when he's near one side of the screen, but by pressing the "fire" button you can switch the clown still on the seesaw to the other side of it, making room to catch the clown that's in the air. It may take several switches in a row to get them back near the center and out of trouble.



**Ms. Pac-Man:** That Inky gives me the willies. But I think Bashful is kind of cute. He's like the son we never had.

**GAMES:** You must sometimes feel as put upon as Job. What are your religious and philosophical beliefs?

**Pac-Man:** We're born-again converts. I think you could also say we believe in reincarnation.

**GAMES:** Some people say your ingesting of so-called "energizers" sets a bad example for kids. How do you reply?

**Pac-Man:** [Furious] Those power pills are absolutely nonaddicting. They're a combination of caffeine and dextrose, and you can buy them in health food stores. I prefer beer anyway.

**GAMES:** What accounts for your tremendous charisma?

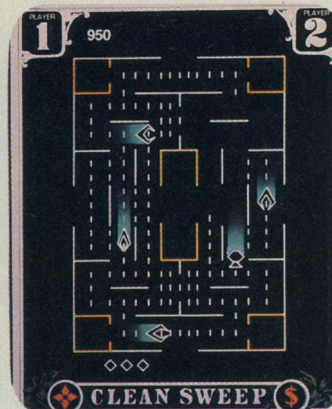
**Pac-Man:** I think people identify with us. We're Everyman ("and Everywoman," breaks in Ms. Pac-Man), driven by our desires, pursued by our personal furies.

**GAMES:** Heavy. On a less serious note, what do you think of your arch-rival, K. C. Munchkin?

**Pac-Man:** He's the sincerest form of flattery. But seriously, K. C. and I are good friends. In fact, we often dine out together—man, can he pack it away.

**Ms. Pac-Man:** Speaking of food, I'm starving. Sorry to end the interview, but we've gotta run. . . . —C.S.

## CLEAN SWEEP



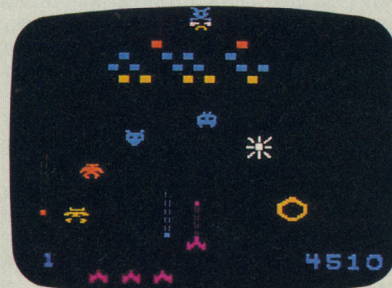
GCE for Vectrex  
(\$30, 1 level, 1-2 players, ★)

In this challenging maze game, you're a vacuum cleaner moving through bank corridors strewn with money. As you vacuum up the loot, you grow fatter, and soon you must deposit what you have in the vault (center) before you can go on. Occasionally robbers enter from the four sides (through which you may also move) and try to thwart your efforts. To counter this, you can enter any of four supercharging rooms (corners) and become able to vacuum up the robbers as well as the money. A second variation is played in a dark maze, in which you can see only the loot.

## COMMUNIST MUTANTS FROM SPACE

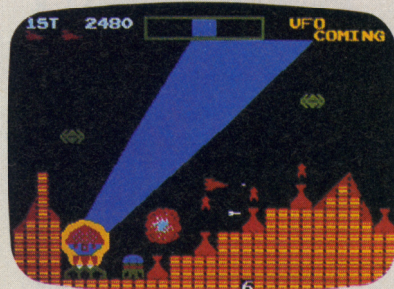
Arcadia for VCS with Supercharger  
(\$15, 9 levels, 1-4 players, ★)

This may be the best of the solitaire shoot-'em-out-of-the-sky games for the VCS in terms of graphics, speed, and challenge. The mutants begin as a phalanx of 28 eggs at the top of the screen, along with a mother creature that hatches them and tries to produce more. Hatched creatures cleverly fall downscreen at different speeds, bounce up and down, dart to the sides, fire lasers, and dive at your cannon. You defend by using shields, penetrating or guided fire, and time warp. Big mom is worth 500 points, so nail her early, but leave the eggs alone—they're worth six times as much once they're hatched. For 50,000 points, you might get invited to the White House. Variation #9 has the fastest, most aggressive bunch of enemies we've seen.





## COSMIC AVENGER



Coleco by ColecoVision  
(\$35, 4 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

This game has the most beautiful graphics we've seen in home video. It also retains the speed, feel, and challenge of the arcade game. You use the joystick for steering and acceleration, and fire buttons to release bombs and lasers at 15 kinds of targets. The first scenes in this scrolling-screen game take you over mountainous terrain full of barrage guns, rocket launchers, and UFOs. Next you move to the flatlands, where you're pitted against tanks that shoot rockets and lay mines. In the most difficult setting, you navigate narrow channels while fending off submarines, torpedoes, rockets, and mines. Finally, the three scenes are repeated in a nighttime setting, a nice touch.

## DEMON ATTACK



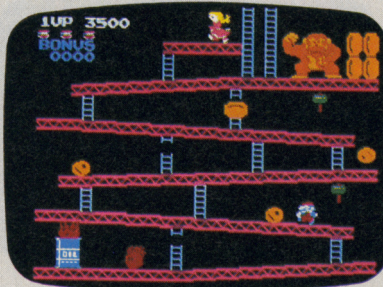
Imagic for VCS (\$30, 4 levels, 1-2 players, ★, shown) and for Intellivision (\$35)

Reminiscent of Centuri's coin-op Phoenix, Demon Attack consists of waves of increasingly nasty birdlike creatures to shoot down. The demons, instead of marching mechanically downscreen, flap their wings, waver back and forth evasively, and swoop at your ground cannon with nicely animated movements and sound effects. Beginning at the fifth wave, a hit bird splits into two smaller birds, and when one of these is hit, its mate immediately goes for the cannon. Variations #9 and #10 are interesting cooperative games in which two players alternate control of the cannon every four seconds. On Intellivision, Demon Attack adds a second phase, in which your cannon takes off into space after the demons' mother ship. A version for Odyssey<sup>2</sup> was not available for play-testing.

## DONKEY KONG

Coleco for ColecoVision (comes with system, 4 levels, 1-2 players, ★, shown) for VCS (\$35) and for Intellivision (\$35)

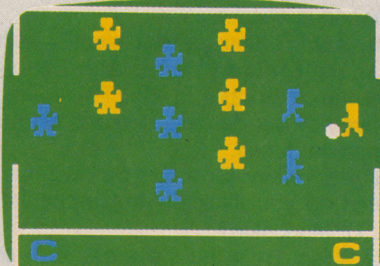
With minor exceptions, this game apes Nintendo's coin-op version extremely well. The object is for Mario the Carpenter (that's you) to save his girlfriend from a hairy beast as quickly as possible. In the first scene, Mario tries to reach her by climbing ladders and jumping barrels and fireballs hurled by the ape. In the second, he must remove rivets from a steel structure while avoiding three squirrely ghosts. Finally, in the "elevator" scene (not used in the VCS version), he has to jump on and off moving objects. If he completes the third scene, the second scene begins anew—but gets harder.



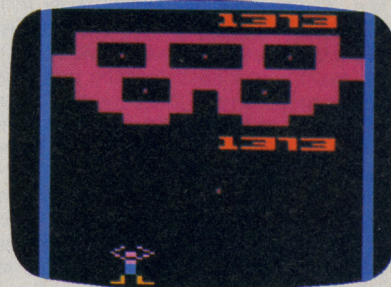
## ELECTRONIC TABLE SOCCER

N.A.P.C.E.C. for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
(\$20, 1 level, 1-2 players sim., ★★)

This game is a slightly simplified version of table soccer (popularly known as "foosball"). Here you control the goalie and the three defensemen as well as two forwards. The defensemen all move up and down in unison, as do the forwards. The action button will send a pass wherever the joystick is pointing. Once you have the ball in range of the goal, pass it back and forth between your forwards and keep them moving, waiting to shoot when the opposing goalie is out of position. The first player to score 10 goals wins (10-3 is a good win). The game is fun even if you don't play it—you can watch the computer play against itself.



## FIREBALL



Arcadia for VCS with Supercharger  
(\$15, 1 level, 1-4 players, ★)

Although some variations may remind you of Atari's Super Breakout, the wall-smashing concept is given an unusual twist in this game. One player at a time maneuvers a little man back and forth at the bottom of the screen. The variations are different arrangements of blocks, and your man has to knock out the blocks while juggling from two to six balls. At the beginning of each of your five turns, two balls are released automatically. During play, you can add one to four more, which you can catch and aim. Juggling two balls is child's play. But with more in action, each block is worth more points, so the way to astronomical scores—and the real point of the game—is to juggle six balls at once. When things get too frantic, you can deflect, rather than catch, the balls.

## FROG BOG

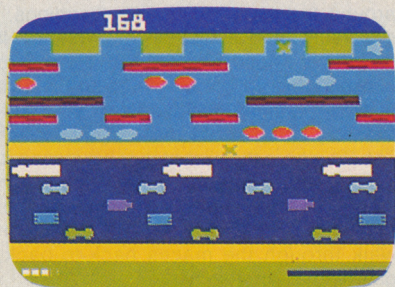


Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$23, 3 levels, 1-2 players sim., ★★)

Eating insects for fun and profit may seem juvenile, but the challenge is not. On the easiest skill level, even small children can control the timing of the frog's jumps. On the medium skill level, you also control the frog's direction, the angle of his arc, and the distance he leaps. The insects, which fly overhead randomly, are of four different types and are worth 5 to 35 points, so it pays to know your entomology. On the third and hardest level, you control not only the frog's movements but also when he sticks out his tongue to catch insects. If you can eat 500 points worth, you must be a prince in disguise.



## FROGGER



Parker Brothers for VCS  
(\$35, 3 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

Ten years ago, most gamers would have laughed at the idea of moving a cute little frog across five crowded lanes of traffic and across a river, using moving turtles and logs as stepping stones, and then maneuvering him into one of five little bays at the top of the screen. But Frogger is one of the hottest arcade games, and the graphics and sound effects of this cartridge compare favorably with those of the coin-op version. What's different is that this Frogger can travel off the edge of the screen, making it easier to get him into the top left bay. As with real frogs, the difference between the quick and the dead is the ability to distinguish logs from crocodiles and diving turtles from surface swimmers. Jumping on a lady frog and getting her into the bay earns bonus points.

## GALACTIC INVASION

Astrocade for Astrocade  
(\$30, 10 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

This game is essentially the coin-op Galaxian by Bally, in which your ground cannon must shoot down phalanxes of invaders that do not merely plod downscreen but peel off in twos and threes to attack the cannon with laser bombs and kamikaze dives. The graphics are nearly identical to those of the arcade game, as are the sound effects and the game play. But in this cartridge, you can choose from 10 difficulty levels, and you get up to nine reserve cannons (lives). Feel free to experiment with new and dangerous techniques—except at the highest skill level, where you'll probably lose all nine lives in a minute or two.



# SHOULD YOU BUY A HOME COMPUTER INSTEAD?

Once upon a time it was easy to tell a game system from a home computer. There were only a few of each on the market, and their differences in cost and capability were clear. But today many home computers cost no more than game systems, sometimes even less, and they also play games. And some game systems are expandable into home computers. So people are asking: Which should I buy?

Scot Morris, games columnist for *Omni Magazine*, takes a practical approach: "If I wanted some computer application, I'd find a computer in my price range that performed it to the degree I needed—most machines play some games anyway. If I just wanted to play games, it wouldn't make sense to buy hardware designed for word processing or accounting. I'd buy a system designed only to play games, based on the selection of software."

Software is the decisive factor for Bernie De Koven, a GAMES contributing editor and computer game designer. "The computer is the ultimate toy. But if it's video games you want, buy a game machine. The Atari VCS has become the Volkswagen of the computer games industry. It gives you access to the widest software library of any game system, and that library is expanding by leaps and bounds. Even with its limited memory, the VCS works very well, and it's durable. True, some of the impressive new machines have adaptors that play VCS cartridges; but those machines are as yet unproven."

Nolan Bushnell, the founder of Atari, says that for the same money, he'd recommend a "low-priced expandable computer" because "you're only hitting half the bases when you get a home game system."

David Ahl, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Creative Computing*, takes a long-term perspective: "I can't imagine a home in the future without a video game system and a personal computer. For \$350, you could buy a Sinclair computer and a VCS, and have enough money left over to get several cartridges for each and sub-

scriptions to some user magazines. That will get you into both fields."

One of Ahl's associate editors, John Anderson, would choose the Atari 400 home computer, priced at around \$250: "First, I could do everything a home computer is designed to do. Second, the games available for it are more interesting and exciting than those for any video game unit. When I'm ready to put down the joystick, I'd have the built-in bonus of a home computer."

Sounds like a pretty good choice for the money, even though the Atari 400's 16K of memory is limited. Turning it off erases whatever is in its memory, but you can save your programs or data files with an inexpensive cassette tape recorder. For more memory and more advanced applications you'll need an interface unit, and maybe a printer too—but now you're into serious computing, at a cost well over \$1,000, a bit more than most game systems plus all their cartridges.

What about starting with a game system and expanding it to a computer later on? The Bally Basic cartridge (for the Astrocade) will let you experiment quite a bit for a modest \$50, and there are two "user" newsletters devoted to creating programs on this system. If you already own an Astrocade, the Z-GRASS 100 keyboard module (\$600) is very impressive, with two built-in computer languages and 32K of RAM; but if you're starting from scratch, the combined cost of Astrocade plus module is about \$900, and for that kind of money you could buy the Atari 800 home computer with 48K of RAM, the Atari 410 cassette recorder to store your own programs, and a modem that gives you access to data banks and other computers. Popular games like Pac-Man, Space Invaders, and Missile Command are available from Atari for their computers, and many other companies also program games for them. But there is, of course, a wide choice of programs for this machine that are *not* games, and that's a bonus you'll be hard-pressed to find with any "hybrid" game/computer system.

The bottom line? If video games are your thing, buy the game machine that offers the greatest number of games you like. If you want to try computing without spending a lot of money, get an inexpensive home computer that offers a large selection of games. But if you're genuinely interested in a specific computer application, yet can't resist what you see on these pages, get a game machine and a computer!

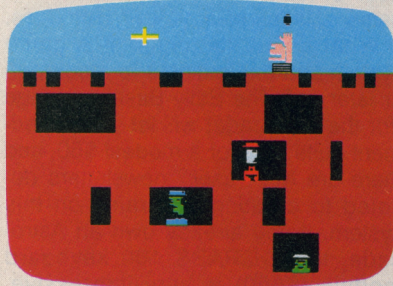
—P.M.W./J.A.



## GANGSTER ALLEY

Spectravision for VCS  
(\$30, 2 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

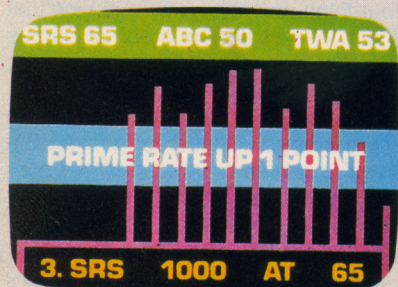
Wanted dead: Shifty, Scar Face, Lefty, and Nitro Ed. Wanted alive: woman and child held hostage by above persons. You're the S.W.A.T. team, and as you enter the alley you see windows on the side of a building. While Nitro Ed guards the roof, the other gang members and their hostages randomly show their faces in the windows for an instant. Your job is to watch for a crook to show himself and then blast him (be careful not to hit the hostages!). But if you don't shoot Nitro Ed before he drops a bomb, the game's over. As the battle wears on (in more and more difficult "waves"), night falls. You then have to fire your gun in order to see, but that wastes precious bullets. Collecting \$40,000 to \$99,990 in rewards makes you Chief.



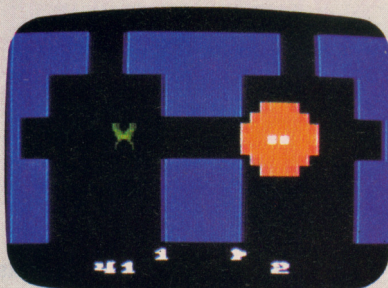
## THE GREAT WALL STREET FORTUNE HUNT

N.A.P.C.E.C. for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
(\$50, 1 level, 1-2 players sim., ★★★)

This, the third in a unique series of games (the others are Quest for the Rings and Conquest of the World) that combine video-screen action with board-game strategy, is a game of making—or losing—money. If you pay attention to the stock prices traveling across your ticker tape, and if you watch news events and can anticipate market fluctuations correctly, you'll be lighting your cigars with \$100 bills. (You're a true tycoon if you amass \$500,000.) But if you ignore the varying sensitivity factors for each company and insist on buying, for instance, Exxon during a crisis in the Middle East... well, don't say we didn't warn you.



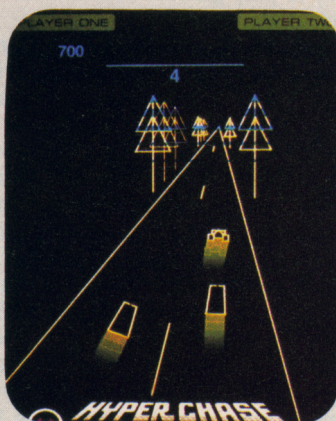
## HAUNTED HOUSE



Atari for VCS  
(\$25, 9 levels, 1 player, ★★)

You're in this very weird house, with 24 rooms on its four floors, and you have nine lives to find three pieces of a magic urn and get them to the main entrance on the first floor. In all variations except the first (beginner's level), the mansion is dark and you need "matches" to illuminate small areas of the rooms and hallways you explore. Each floor has two to six stairways, and you should memorize which ones lead up and which lead down—unless you enjoy being trapped by deadly creatures. In some variations you have to find keys to unlock doors. You are scored according to how long it takes you to retrieve the urn, how many matches you've used, and how many lives you've lost. Using fewer than 20 matches in the advanced variation is good.

## HYPERCHASE



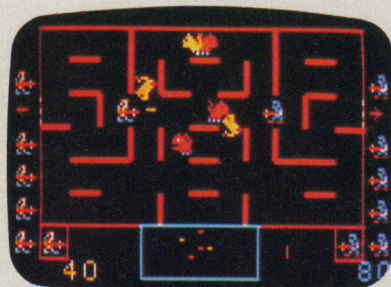
GCE for Vectrex  
(\$30, 1 level, 1-2 players, ★★)

The visual effects when you're in fourth gear with the accelerator pressed to the floor are enough to make your hands shake at the console. In one of the two games on this cartridge you are timed by a stopwatch; in the other you accumulate points. Either way, you're in for a wild joyride. Once in fourth gear, you'll race through city streets, dark tunnels, and straightaways into the desert, where trees, shrubs, mesas, fences, rocks, and telephone poles whiz by while you're avoiding the side of the road or the cars you pass. Sound effects are not only good but also useful—you can time your shifts through all four gears by listening to the sound of the engine.

## THE INCREDIBLE WIZARD

Astrocade for Astrocade  
(\$35, 3 levels, 1-2 players sim., ★)

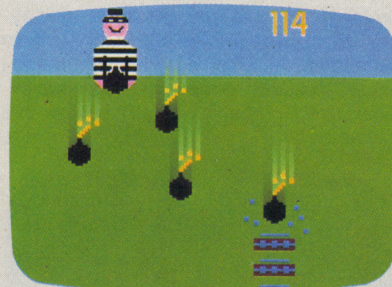
This translation of the multilevel dungeons of Bally's coin-op Wizard of Wor works very well. Each "worrier" (player) wanders around the maze destroying "worlings," minotaurs, and a fast-flying "worluk." If you get too good on any level, the wizard himself turns up unexpectedly and shoots in wild, machine-gun bursts. If you successfully complete 11 mazes, you'll reach The Pit, where the wizard is at his meanest. You're even meaner if you can reach 17,000 points. There's a two-player cooperative version in which the players can walk through the mazes back-to-back, guarding all approaches.



## KABOOM!

Activision for VCS  
(\$23, 1 level, 1-2 players, ★)

A mad-looking bomber races around dropping bombs, and you have three buckets of water to catch them in before they explode. Trying to keep up with the bomber as he gets faster and the number of bombs increases is one of the reasons this game is so addictive. If you let a bomb explode just before your score reaches a multiple of 1,000 points (which restores a bucket if you've lost one), the speed of the bomber will stay at its earlier level and you'll regain the lost bucket immediately anyway. After the fifth wave, watch the bomber's frown change to a smile as his bombs explode. You are bucket-brigade material if you score 5,000 points per game, although to join Activision's Kaboom Club you need a photo showing only 3,000.





# HERE'S TO THOSE WHO'VE TAUGHT US THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.

In 1843, Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* to "awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season."

The book was an immediate success. And since then it has become as much a part of the holiday season as mistletoe and stockings hung by the fireplace.

Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim have shown generation after generation that Christmas isn't just a day of getting but a season of giving.

We at Cutty Sark toast the spirit of Christmas and those who keep it alive. And hope that you, too, will raise a glass to everyone who's shown you what Christmas is all about.

Charles Dickens

The Scotch with a

following of leaders.

CUTTY

SARK®







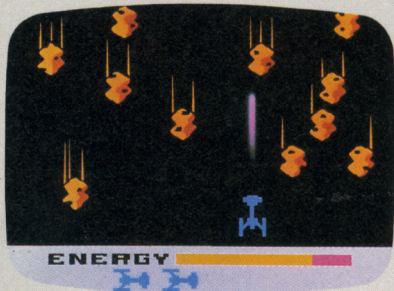
## MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$30, 4 levels, 2 players sim., ★★★)

This is the best simulation of baseball we've seen so far. It allows total control of defense and near-total control of offense. Plastic overlays convert your keypad into a miniature ballpark in which, for example, button 6 corresponds to the second baseman. To chase down a ball, press the correct button to send any player you like after it. To peg the ball home, just press catcher, and whoever has the ball will throw it to the plate. Unfortunately, once two players get proficient, fielding and base running become more important than hitting. Double plays are possible, as are base-stealing, rundowns, pitchouts, and even suicide bunts. Good players will usually keep the total number of runs scored under 10.

## MEGAMANIA



Activision for VCS  
(\$30, 2 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

If you liked Space Invaders but tired of its predictability, Megamania will revive your interest. Eight different waves of objects try to destroy your ground cannon by dropping bombs and diving at it. Some waves simply move repeatedly across the screen until you destroy all the objects. But the more difficult waves are dizzyingly unpredictable; some objects going right, others left, down, and who knows where. For each wave you are allotted a certain amount of energy plus a reserve cannon. Completing a wave replenishes your energy and gives you points based on how much energy remains unused, and at every 10,000 points you earn another reserve cannon. We tip our hat to scores of 50,000 or more.

## MICRO SURGEON

Imagic for Intellivision  
(\$40, 3 levels, 1 player, ★★)

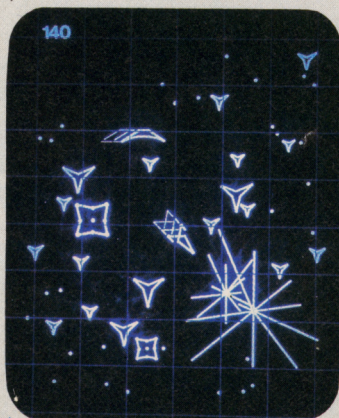
Remember the movie *Fantastic Voyage*, in which scientists were shrunk so they could perform a delicate brain operation from inside the patient? That's the idea here. Your vessel, reduced to micro-size, has been injected in the patient's body, and you have only a short time to work your miracles while avoiding white blood cells, which try to destroy you. Your mission (close your eyes if you're squeamish) is to remove a brain tumor, nicotine deposits from the lungs, and a blood clot near the heart. Yes, this patient is sick, folks, but fortunately the game is addictive, challenging, and not at all realistic.



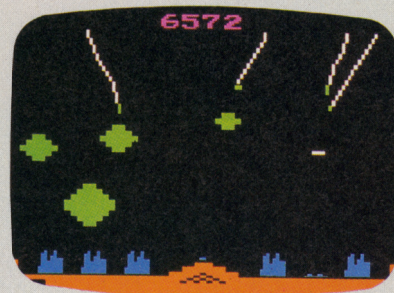
## MINE STORM

GCE for Vectrex (1 level, 1-2 players, ★)

Mine Storm is not a cartridge but comes with the Vectrex unit as built-in software, and it is a most impressive game. It consists of 13 increasingly difficult mine fields, or waves of play, each containing four types of mines—floating, fireball, magnetic, and magnetic fireball—that are, in that order, harder and harder to hit. Since they will blow up your ship on contact, you not only shoot to destroy them but also thrust, turn right or left, and escape into hyperspace when things get tight. When you hit a mine with your rapid-fire laser, it splits into two still smaller mines, which, in turn, split into two still smaller ones when hit—and these are the buggers that most often do you in. Mine Storm has all the play value and action of coin-op Asteroids, and better graphics.



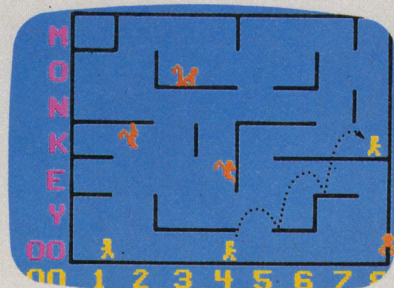
## MISSILE COMMAND



Atari for VCS (\$32, 5 levels, 1-2 players ★, shown), and for 5200 (\$32)

In this successful twist on the Space Invaders concept, the enemy attacks your ground installations—six cities and a missile launch pad—in progressively belligerent waves and in patterns not easily memorized. As enemy IBMs trace their paths downscreen, you must shoot them out of the air. You have 30 ABMs for each attack wave, but you can save ammunition by knocking out two IBMs with a single shot aimed at a point where their paths cross, and by not shooting at IBMs headed toward destroyed cities. You can choose fast or slow target controls and dumb or smart cruise missiles, and you can start at the first, seventh, or 15th attack wave. If you're shooting around 100,000 or over, we salute you.

## MONKEYSHINES



N.A.P.C.E.C. for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
(\$33, 1 level, 1-2 players sim., ★)

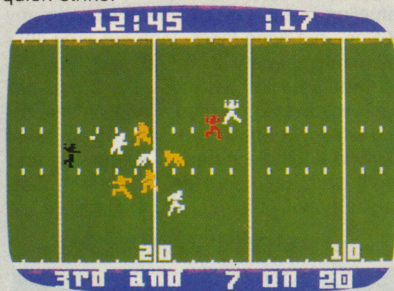
This cartridge offers five distinct game variations. The basic one, Monkey Tag, is a game of tag between humans (players) and monkeys (computer). Four monkeys begin each game at the top of the screen and proceed to swing, slide, and jump across an arrangement of bars (different each time you play) in pursuit of two humans, who start at the bottom. A human can jump up only one level of bars at a time, unless another human allows him to stand on his shoulders. Cooperation is necessary for a high score (173 is the current record) because these tricky monkeys are as hard to catch as trout in August.



## NFL FOOTBALL

Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$30, 4 levels, 2 players, ★★)

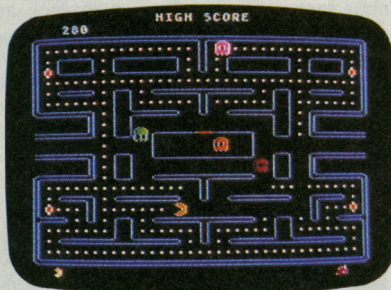
For the excitement and realism of football on a video screen, nothing touches this cartridge, though some players complain about action time—a game usually takes two hours. There are a great variety of offensive plays available, but this is mainly a passing game, and you can make only a few yards on any running play. But don't throw the "bomb"—go for short, snappy passes that gain five to eight yards, use your quarterback's roll-out to confuse the defense, and add a few running plays to the outside on those "third and three" situations. Your best chance for a touchdown is with a long, slow drive rather than a quick strike.



## PAC-MAN

Atari for the 5200 (\$40, 1-2 players ★, shown) and for VCS (\$35, 8 levels)

The graphics and gameplay of Bally's coin-op Pac-Man have been splendidly reproduced for the 5200. The only real difference between this and the arcade version is that the maze has been stretched to fit a television screen, as a result of which your favorite arcade patterns won't work. The VCS version has a different maze and much weaker graphics, but when considered on its own merits is still an excellent game, perhaps one of the best for the system. The only problem with home Pac-Man is not with the game but the joysticks—Atari's controllers are harder to work than those of an arcade machine, so attempts to make quick turns are often frustrated.



## LICENSE TO THRILL

You've seen the movie, now play the game!" It's an old come-on with a new twist, as video game manufacturers license such blockbuster entertainments as *Superman*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Tron*. But what happens when they run out of hot properties to buy? Not to worry. There are plenty of sleepers out there waiting to be converted into great video games. Grab 'em while they're hot.

**Jaws VI** An elderly shark with gum disease is found trapped in a lagoon. As the lifeguard, a player must tempt the shark close to shore using small children as bait, then perform a root canal and remove the shark's teeth while retaining all 10 fingers.

**Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice** The object is to get all four characters into the same bed and keep them there for longer than 10 seconds. Bob constantly wanders off to a hot tub, Carol keeps wanting a cigarette, Ted shuffles to the refrigerator for tofu ice cream, and Alice runs off to her encounter group.

**Heaven's Gate** You, the director, must guide a rotten script through a galaxy of international stars in terrible weather and still manage to complete the film on schedule without going more than \$10 million over budget. Watch out for the critics' bombs, raining down vengefully from overhead.

**The Exorcist** You play the priest, trying desperately to keep the possessed girl's body flat on the bed. Just as you get her arms pinned, the legs flail wildly; get them down and her head spins around completely. Once you subdue her, say a prayer, because Satan then turns on you.

**Airport '84** A one-player game in which you try to land a jet plane by controlling altitude, pitch, roll, and thrust. But that's the least of your problems. The landing gear is stuck, there's an impenetrable snowstorm, the airstrip is blocked, rival airline companies are shooting missiles at you, hysterical passengers are trying to break into the cockpit, the co-pilot is dead, and a madman's bomb is about to go off.

**Waiting for Godot** You aimlessly maneuver Vladimir and Estragon over a desolate landscape. There are no instructions, no strategy tips, no object. Time's up, you lose.

—P.M.W./C.S.

## PBA BOWLING



Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$30, 1 level, 1-4 players, ★★★)

This game is so involving that even people who hate bowling will probably enjoy it, and, like the real sport, it appeals to a wide age range. You can select from 10 ball weights and 10 degrees of alley slickness (each with a different effect on ball curves), and you can compensate for a bowler's right- or left-handedness. The display consists of two screens. First you see the bowler and about one-third of the alley; then, when a ball is released, a head-on shot of the pins. It takes skill to roll strikes consistently because of the need to curve the ball accurately. Spares, however, can be practiced between matches with the Pick-Up Spares variation.

## PGA GOLF

Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$25, 1 level, 1-4 players, ★★★)

This nine-hole course is slow-moving but strategic. You see a colorful overhead view of each hole's tee, fairway, rough, sand traps, green, and cup. Your nine different clubs, from driver to putter, allow you to hit any shot long, medium, or short, or to slice or hook the ball. Charts detail exactly how far each club and each type of swing will hit a ball (the whole screen is 580 "yards" wide). To hit a shot over the trees, rather than around them, requires a club with the correct loft, and the charts give you the height you can get with each. With each new game the trees are rearranged at random, so you can't memorize the holes or hazards. The eighth hole is murder.







## PITFALL!

Activision for VCS (\$30, 1 level, 1 player, ★★) and for Intellivision (\$32)

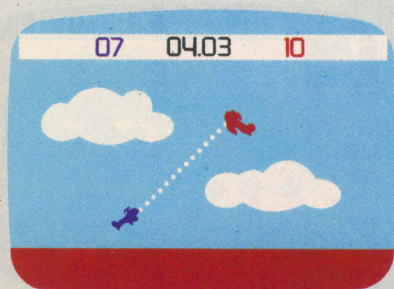
The game and screen display (shown) are identical in both systems. Pitfall Harry's search for 32 treasures (gold and silver bars, bags of money, and diamond rings) leads him through as many as 255 different jungle scenes, both above and below ground, each with its own hazards to overcome by running, jumping, and swinging on vines. He can move faster below ground, but that's where the scorpions are, the hardest obstacles to jump. Above ground, the snakes, fires, open holes, and rolling logs aren't much trouble, but the crocodiles are. The game usually ends because they've cost Harry either his three lives or his 20 minutes. Good scores begin at about 75,000 points; a perfect score (impossible?) is 114,000.



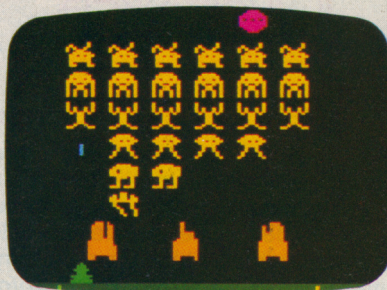
## RED BARON/PANZER ATTACK

Astrocade for Astrocade (\$30, ★)

Piloting a biplane in a World War I air battle may not sound exciting, but if you want to experience the thrills of dogfighting and performing complicated aerobatic maneuvers like the Immelmann Turn or the Barrel Roll, Red Baron (1 level, 2 players sim.) is the game to play. You control your plane's speed and also its altitude and orientation (even upside-down) as you attempt to shoot down enemy planes. Add cloud cover and you've got a lot of room for strategic maneuvering. The game's only drawback is that it can't be played solitaire. Panzer Attack (10 levels, 1-4 players sim.), also included on this cartridge, is a slow sort of battle, but still a good tank game with many variations.



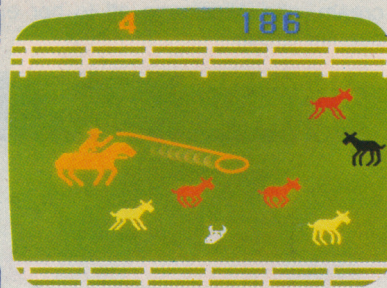
## SPACE INVADERS



Atari for VCS (\$30, 2 levels, 1-2 players sim., ★, shown), and for 5200 (\$32)

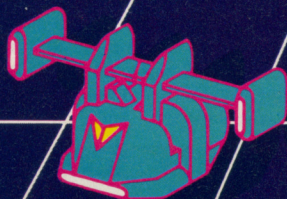
Although many players can "max out" (continually roll the score back to zero) on this great-granddaddy of the outer space shoot-'em-ups, the game concept retains a lot of play value, and for good reasons. First, the object of destroying invading aliens before they land on earth is easy to understand. Second, the aliens are predictable and there are no confusing random elements, so strategy is fairly simple. Even so, it takes considerable skill to reach scores of 500,000 or more. Invisible Invaders, in which you can see the aliens for only an instant at a time, whenever you hit one, is the only one of the 111 variations that is more challenging than the basic game.

## STAMPEDE



Activision for VCS (\$23, 8 levels, 1 player, ★, shown) and for Intellivision (\$32)

Think of it as a sideways outer space shoot-'em-up. The lasso is your cannon, the various cows and bulls are enemy ships worth points, and the obstacles along the trail are asteroids to be avoided. The screen scrolls from right to left, so keep your eye on the right side and memorize the order the dogies appear in. (Don't let three get past you or the game ends.) The high score reported by Activision is 157,000, but if you send them a photo showing 3,000 points, you'll be entered in the Stampede Trail Drive Club and receive a membership patch. The Intellivision version is identical.



## STAR RAIDERS

Atari for the 5200 (\$40, 1 level, 1 player, ★★)

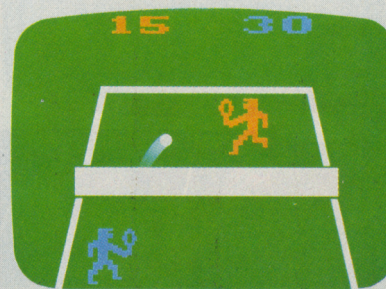
Originally developed for the Atari 800 home computer, this game surpasses many similar efforts for the VCS. A galactic chart shows the position and number of enemies in the galaxy. Using your allotted energy sparingly (except when near a refueling base), you can hyperwarp to any sector—but once there, look out. Any enemy in that space will try to destroy you. To protect yourself you have a computer tracking device, fore and aft views, shields, and other weapons. At first, using all of them in a single game is confusing, and you'll probably score no better than Garbage Scow Captain, Class 4. Patience.



## TENNIS

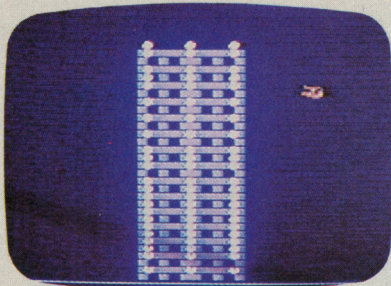
Activision for VCS (\$23, 2 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

Alan Miller's big breakthrough in screen display was this trapezoidal court and its graphic illusion of depth. Then he added a shadow to the moving ball (giving players a better idea of the ball's altitude), a good racket-impact sound, full court movement for both players, and a tough computer opponent. The result is a classic tennis challenge that requires real court strategy as well as fast hands. You can angle your shots by using the sides of the racket, and the closer you play to the net the wider the angles you can hit. But if you get out of position, your opponent will run you back and forth like Borg versus an amateur.





## TOWERING INFERNO



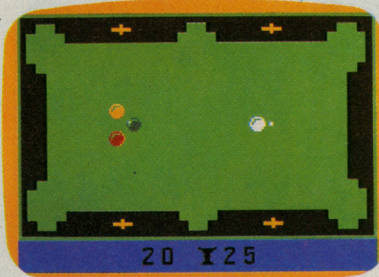
U.S. Games for VCS  
(\$30, 7 levels, 1-2 players, ★)

In this enjoyable parody of the movie of the same name, your situation resembles Steve McQueen's. Nine buildings are on fire, each having nine floors, and on each floor are four trapped but hopeful survivors. If you take too long to save them, they'll burn to cinders. You have four firemen per floor, and the game ends if you can't rescue at least one person. Each floor has a different layout of passageways and a different arrangement of flames, which dance around crazily. You can dodge the flames or cut a path through them, then grab the survivors and head for the lower right corner of the screen, where a helicopter awaits. Then it's on to the next floor. A very good score is 8,000 points.

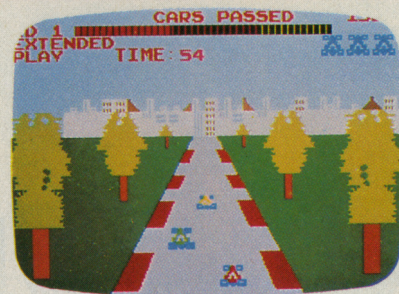
## TRICK SHOT

Imagic for VCS  
(\$23, 1 level, 1-2 players, ★★★)

Amid the clatter of wars in outer space and mazes being munched, here's a game that requires no hand-eye coordination, causes no wrist ache, and doesn't make much noise. The cartridge includes three challenges: Pool, English Billiards, and Trick-shot (our favorite). Pool and Billiards are fun when two play, but because the VCS can display only four balls at a time, these games are not much like the real things. In Trickshot—a series of nine tricky shots set up by the computer—this doesn't matter. Each setup requires you to sink one to three balls with a single shot by determining the right impact, angle, and "english." A few are easy enough after a little trial and error, but most demand precise timing and lots of patience.



## TURBO



Coleco for ColecoVision  
with Expansion Module #2  
(\$75 includes module, 1-2 players, ★★)

This very fast, graphically detailed racing game promises to reproduce all aspects of the coin-op version. The Expansion Module includes not only a steering wheel but also an accelerator that goes on the floor and is operated by your foot! A hand controller is placed next to the wheel, and its joystick becomes the gearshift lever. As you drive the car down city streets, on country roads, over bridges, and through tunnels, you have to avoid oil slicks, the side of the road, and, of course, other cars. Your clock time and the number of cars passed are always displayed. We were not able to play-test by press time but the demonstration cartridges at trade shows were very impressive. (Continued on page 52)



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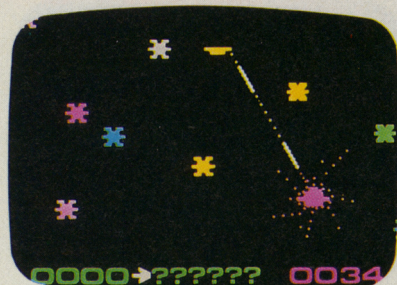
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## UFO!



N.A.P.C.E.C. for Odyssey<sup>2</sup>  
(\$32, 1 level, 1 player, ★)

You're in control of a star cruiser with a rotating laser gun, a force field, and the ability to maneuver through space, which is littered with three types of UFOs: fairly harmless drifters, hunter-killers that home in on the star cruiser, and light-speed starships that streak across the screen firing deadly lasers. To deal with this last enemy, you can either hide among the drifters, which absorb enemy laser fire, or shoot at everything in sight, and when a starship appears, fly parallel to it. Since your ship's force field blows up the enemy on contact, ramming is an effective tactic. In fact, we've seen 95 points racked up by UFOs gravitating into the force field of an uncontrolled cruiser. But that's a long way from the published high score of 7,510.

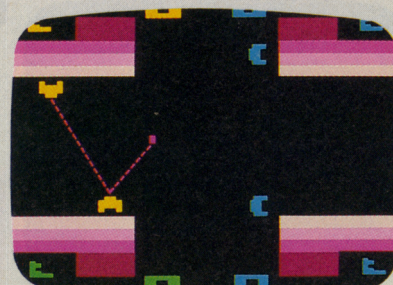
## UTOPIA

Mattel for Intellivision  
(\$35, 1 level, 1-2 players sim., ★★★)

In this unique game, you are the absolute ruler of an island utopia, and you score points by improving its population's standard of living. You are free to invest your initial 100 gold bars on factories, forts, schools, hospitals, crops, housing projects, rebels (in the two-player variation), PT boats, and fishing vessels. Weather conditions and pirate ships, which affect crop yields and fishing hauls, are randomly controlled by the computer. If you want to plant crops, do it before your other spending. And get a fishing boat as early as possible, because moving it over a school of fish earns gold bars. If you keep your people fat, happy, and fruitful, you will prosper along with them.



## WARLORDS



Atari for VCS  
(\$30, 2 levels, 1-4 players sim., ★)

This lively combination of Pong and Breakout is best with four players. You are feuding warlords, each protected from enemy fireballs by a brick castle whose two exposed walls are guarded by a movable shield. You can use the shield either to deflect the fireball or to catch, hold, and release it against an opponent's vulnerable spots. A common tactic is to catch it, feint to one side, then whip back to the other side and release it at an unprotected target. You can also angle your shots off the "ghost" shield of a destroyed warlord—if you remember exactly where it was when its warlord was destroyed. The computer is a fairly easy opponent because its attack patterns are predictable; human opponents are another story.



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